

# Long-term food storage

By Jackie Clay

**Y**ou've decided that you're going to put at least a year's worth of food away for your family just in case. Great!

Everyone should do that. We store enough to feed friends, extended family, and neighbors from time to time, as well. We could not turn down anyone who came to us saying, "I'm hungry." So I stock up more than most people do.

## Flours and grains

Man may not live by bread alone, but grains form the base for many



*The author prepares green beans for canning and dehydrating.*



*Home canning helps fill the pantry. Note decorative popcorn tins in the background, filled with dry foods.*

meals, especially during a period of hard times. With flours and whole grains stored, you have the main ingredient for homemade pastas, breads, rolls, biscuits, pancakes, waffles, tortillas and other flat breads, pie crusts, cookies, cakes, and more.

I store unbleached (who needs bleaching compounds in their diet?) flour, at least 200 pounds, in 25-pound store bags, wrapped in plastic bags and duct tape, in Rubbermaid garbage cans with locking lids in my pantry. This will feed three of us, plus extra for friends and family, for over a year, coupled with other flour products and whole grains.

You can add any specialty flours your family likes, such as rye, amaranth, or Durham (for specialty pastas).

In addition to this flour, I like at least 100 pounds of hard wheat (sometimes called "wheat berries"). As ground whole wheat goes rancid fairly quickly, I like this wheat on hand to grind for all of my whole wheat recipes. In addition, whole wheat grain will grow when planted, making wheat growing on a fairly small plot possible to restock my supply. As little as a 50x50-foot plot will grow enough wheat for a small family's needs.

I also stock about 20 pounds of corn meal, 20 pounds of masa harina de maiz (corn flour) which I use to make tamales and corn tortillas, along with 25 pounds of popcorn (grinds nicely for cornmeal, as well as popping for treats), and 25 pounds of hominy corn (makes hominy and also masa harina de maiz).

Rice, both brown and white, fit nicely in our storage pantry. We also store about 25 pounds of a combination of white and brown rice with a few pounds of wild rice mixed in.

And don't forget rolled oats. They are much more versatile than just using them for oatmeal. I include them in several multi-grain breads, breakfast cake, bars, meat loaf, granola, and cookies. And as for oatmeal, we like it cooked up with peaches, strawberries, and apples, with cinnamon for a treat.

Any grains that are ground, especially corn meal, masa harina de maiz, and whole wheat will get rancid quicker than do whole grains, which usually stay good for many years. Even so, flours (except whole wheat flour) will stay perfectly good for five years or more if kept dry and stored in air tight and bug and rodent-proof containers.

I buy my white flour, cornmeal, etc. on sale at local supermarkets, usually just before Thanksgiving, as it is cheaper then. Otherwise, I pick it up at Sam's Club or other restaurant supply houses.

I pick up whole grains from local grain farmers. Sometimes the wheat needs a bit more cleaning if dusty, but a few pours from one basket to another on a windy day ensures very clean wheat. (And my wheat is *not* treated with toxic fumigants in storage bins before being ground into flour, as is most wheat sold to flour mills.)

When buying flour to store, be absolutely sure the bags are completely sealed, with no flour leaking out, to prevent flour weevil problems. In areas where there is a weevil problem (webs and "bugs" in unsealed cornmeal and flour), some folks freeze each bag of flour for several days before wrapping and storing it in completely bug-proof containers. I have not done this, but I am exceptionally careful not to store any flour products that were not very well sealed from the processing plant, and

I keep them in insect proof containers. Remember that these moths are very small and squeeze through very tiny openings.

It is not necessary to buy flours and grains from long-term storage companies unless you fear flooding. In this case, sealed tins or buckets of flours would be a good idea. I've had plain white flour stored for over five years, which is just as good today as it was when I bought it.

## Beans and other legumes

When one thinks of long-term storage, usually dried beans come first to mind. I guess this is because they remain good for so long, are nutritious, and taste pretty darned good to boot. But, for heaven's sake, don't just buy a hundred pounds of navy beans and say you're all set for whatever may come your way. All beans do not taste the same. There's a big, big difference between a large white lima and a Jacob's cattle bean, for instance. Some taste nutty, some bland. Some cook up quickly, some require hours of cooking. Some remain firm after cooking, others get mushy and soft. Experiment with a

wide variety of beans before committing to a choice.

We store about 50 pounds of combined legumes, which include pintos, Cherokee mixed cornfield beans, Jacob's cattle, Hopi black bush, navies, red kidney, and a dozen old Native American varieties, along with lentils, soup peas, blackeyed peas, and garbanzos.

Beans are a great protein source and combine well in many different dishes. Refried beans, fried dry pea patties, stews, soups, chiles, baked beans, and casseroles are just a few uses for these versatile legumes.

You can buy your beans in local markets, health food stores, and co-ops, or you can do like we do, and grow your own.

All beans store a long, long time in an airtight and bug and rodent-proof container. I keep mine in gallon glass jars and in decorative popcorn tins, right on handy shelves in the kitchen. While old beans do take longer to cook up tender, they last indefinitely; I've grown beans from 500-year-old seeds. And if you can grow plants from seed, you can certainly eat them.



*Home canned foods are more tasty and nutritious, and it takes only minutes to get between the garden and the jar.*

## Dried pasta

While I make a lot of homemade pasta, I still keep quite a bit in our storage pantry. When you're busy with a survival situation, you may not have time to make pasta. So I've put away 10 pounds of long spaghetti, 10 pounds of lasagna noodles, 10 pounds of wide egg noodles, 5 pounds of alphabet macaroni, 15 pounds of elbow macaroni, and a few pounds of assorted pasta noodles.

This dry pasta keeps indefinitely when stored in a dry, bug and rodent-proof container. As with my beans and other legumes, I use decorative popcorn tins and gallon glass jars. After several years, the elbow macaroni smells a bit rancid, but it is still good when cooked with cheese or other sauces.

## Sugar and honey

You will probably agree with me that we all eat too much sugar. And although honey is natural and better for us than refined sugar, it's still sugar. But in bad times, we usually feel better with "treats" from time to time. And these treats often include sugar. Also, much fruit is home canned with a sugar syrup, and if you're going to can to keep your pantry from running out in bad times, you'll need quite a bit for fruits, pickles, jams, jellies, preserves, etc.

Although my husband Bob is a diabetic, we do include sugar in our storage pantry. I keep a 25-pound sack in a plastic garbage can, along with assorted other dry foods. Much of this sugar is used in canning and desserts for my son, David, and myself. Bob needs a sugar substitute.

Sugar stores indefinitely if kept dry. If it should get damp and harden, you can still save it. Beat the bag with a hammer, being careful not to split the sack. (I would put the paper bag in a heavy plastic bag, just in case.) Soon the hard lump will be many smaller ones, easy to crumble with your hand.



*A full pantry staves off hunger.*

Honey is a good long-term storage bet. Honey may crystallize if it gets too cool, but it is still good and will re-liquify if warmed up by sitting the jar in a saucepan of boiling water. Raw honey only needs to be put into quart or larger jars and sealed. I have 15-year-old honey that's still great. (In case you're wondering, I try to keep a little of each food for a long, long time, to see just *how* long it will remain good. I *do* rotate my long-term storage food, using the oldest and replacing it with newer food in an ongoing process.)

I keep two gallons of honey, stored in quart jars.

Besides these two sweeteners, I keep 10 pounds of brown sugar and 5 pounds of powdered sugar, stored in the bag they come in until I'm ready to use them. These bags are stored in the plastic garbage can, along with the white sugar and much more. The only problem I've had regularly with brown sugar is hardening in the bag. I've cured this by breaking the sugar

into chunks, dropping them into a gallon glass jar and adding a piece of paper towel, dampened with water. Close the jar and in a few days the sugar will be soft again.

## Miscellaneous dry goods

**Powdered egg** is a handy dry food to keep on the pantry shelves. The modern powdered egg is much better than the old "green eggs" of military service days. Not only is it great in cooking, but it tastes pretty good too. I keep three #10 cans, which hold almost a gallon, on my pantry shelves.

**Powdered margarine and butter** are another "must have" for most families. These are reconstituted with either water or vegetable oil, with the oil tasting much better. I keep three of each, even though we have a cow and goats. One never knows when they may be dry and you need butter.

**Powdered cheese** is a great product that stores easily. I use it in macaroni and cheese, on popcorn, in potatoes au gratin, casseroles, and more. I keep about 10 pounds of a powdered cheese sauce that I buy from a local restaurant supply house quite inexpensively.

**Dry yeast** is a definite must in a long-term storage pantry, as well as in everyday use. I buy mine in 1-pound vacuum packed aluminum foil bags. Unopened and frozen, they last indefinitely. Unopened and on the shelf, they'll last for a couple of years. Opened and on the shelf, dry yeast is active for about a year or a little more. I keep an unopened bag in my propane fridge's freezer, figuring that if an emergency situation occurs, causing us to have to do without the fridge, my yeast will still be good for better than a year. I have another one on the shelf that I use every day.

**Baking soda** is also a necessary baking leavening agent, also useful for an antacid, deodorant, cleaner, and more. It keeps on the shelf forever. I keep 5 pounds.

**Baking powder** is hard to do without. You'll need it for quick breads, such as cornbread and biscuits, which are very important in emergencies because you can eat well and spend only minutes in baking. It keeps well for years without losing its leavening ability. I keep two large tins, one to use and one to store.

**Salt** is needed, not only to improve the flavor of foods but in meat preservation and canning. I keep 10 pounds of iodized salt in 1-pound boxes, and 10 pounds of canning salt. Canning salt is used in pickles because table salt contains chemicals that sometimes cause pickles to soften or discolor. Dry salt will keep forever. If it should harden, beat it with a hammer and it will be made useable.

**Dry milk** is a necessity, even for those of us who have dairy animals. One never knows when your animals may be dry and you need milk—today. Dehydrated milk does *not* taste as good as fresh, no matter whose claims say theirs does. But it is great for cooking and it will work on cereal or for chocolate milk. The boxes at your local store will last for years with no change in taste. I keep about 10 pounds of dry milk, even though we have dairy animals.

**Spices** are indispensable. Be sure to store a wide variety of your favorites. True, spices do lose some of their flavor in a year or so. But better to have an old spice than no spice. They will “keep” forever, but will slowly lose their potency. I buy most of mine in oriental markets and restaurant supply houses.

## Miscellaneous canned necessities

**Peanut butter** isn't just for kids, folks. It's a tasty, great protein source that's versatile, as well. No one guesses that the secret ingredient in my best stir-fry is a tablespoonful of chunky peanut butter. Remember that besides peanut butter sandwiches and spread on toast, you can bake cookies

and other deserts with this protein-filled treat. Unopened, it'll last for years.

**Shortening and vegetable oils** will make cooking more of a pleasure, not to mention all the baking you may want to do. Most shortenings will store indefinitely in the pantry and unopened bottles of vegetable oils will be fine for over a year, usually longer. Rotate the oils more frequently than the solid shortening. You will probably like using corn oil to reconstitute your powdered margarine and butter, instead of water. You'll use more shortening and vegetable oil in a year than you'd guess. I store a dozen cans of shortening and 6 large bottles of vegetable oil.

## Dehydrate foods at home

Unless you need sealed cans of dehydrated foods, you can dehydrate food for long-term storage yourself. It's amazing how easy it is to dry foods at home. While I home-can a huge variety of foods, I also rely on dehydrated foods, which compliment the canned foods. For instance, canned peas taste like nasty mush. Sorry Jolly Green, it's the truth. So instead of canning my peas, I dehydrate them. When rehydrated, they taste almost as good as fresh.

You can dehydrate foods on cookie sheets in a gas oven, with only the pilot on, in the oven of a wood cook stove with a slow fire and the door open, over a register, or in the back of your station wagon or Suburban on a hot day. I've dried foods on sheets, laid out on tin porch roofs, and in hay mows, protected from insects and dust by cheesecloth or old curtains. But, finally, I caught a killer sale at Wal-Mart and bought a round plastic electric dehydrator. (Vita-Mix also sells these.) I've dehydrated bushels of produce and it's showing no sign of weakening. I also bought two extra trays 10 years back, which help.

We live far off grid, but use the dehydrator when we have the genera-

tor on for a few hours for my writing or tool use. It's a little peculiar, but it works.

**Peas** are very easy to dehydrate at home. Simply shell your peas, then dip them into boiling water for one minute to blanch them. If you don't, the flavor will not keep as well. Let them drip dry, then spread them out on your trays, one layer deep. Dehydrate until they are hard and puckered. If using a cookie sheet, stir them a time or two.

Cool and pour into airtight, vermin-proof containers. I use odd shaped glass jars. I keep at least two gallons in storage, and they'll last for years. Rehydrate in boiling water and let them steep for an hour or two. For use in soups and stews, simply sprinkle a handful or two of dried peas into your stock. Simmer until done. Simple and tasty.

Not enough peas in the garden to dehydrate? Buy some on-sale frozen peas, thaw 'em, and go at it. They work fine.

**Onions and garlic** are about as easy as it gets. I peel them and slice whole round slices off, about an eighth of an inch thick. Place in a single layer on your tray and begin dehydrating. Dry until quite dry. I then chop them, either using a blender (when the generator is on) or in a food grinder. Dump the chopped onions out on a cookie sheet and dry further, until crunchy-dry. These may be stored as is or reduced to a textured powder to use in cooking as onion powder. I do some of each, and keep a quart of onion powder, a half pint of garlic powder, a quart of minced onion, and a half pint of minced garlic on my pantry shelf. I use these every day.

**Sweet corn** is another of my favorites. I briefly boil a couple dozen ears of corn, then cut the kernels off the cob and lay them on a drying tray in a single layer. Corn needs to be stirred often if on a cookie sheet, but is fine on a screen or regular dehydrator tray. Dry until tough

and hard, then store in an airtight jar or other container. To rehydrate and use as fresh corn, I boil it for one minute, then place in the fridge overnight. The next day it's hard to tell from fresh corn. This sweet corn will keep for years in decent storage. If you run out of fresh corn, frozen or canned corn will dehydrate fine.

**Carrots** dehydrate great at home. Slice or dice the carrots into 1/4-inch pieces. Blanch for one minute in steam or boiling water. Drip dry and put on a tray in a single layer. Dehydrate until leathery and quite hard.

**Green beans** dry fine, too. Simply cut into one inch pieces, blanch for a minute, dry, and lay in a single layer on the tray. They should be leathery-brittle. Green beans take a little more time to rehydrate. You can't just put a handful into a casserole and bake it. They'll still be tough. They should be rehydrated the night before and kept in the water they were boiled in overnight in the fridge.

**Peppers** of all kinds dehydrate wonderfully. The old way was to string them by the stems and hang in the sun on a porch wall. But if you live in a humid climate, you'll probably have molded peppers if you use this method. So use the dehydrator method. Seed the peppers, then halve thin-walled hot peppers or slice thick-walled peppers, such as bell peppers, in 1/4-inch wide slices. Dehydrate in a single layer until crunchy.

**Broccoli** works great dehydrated, which is lucky because it is terrible when canned. Cut into small florets and blanch. Lay out in a single layer and dehydrate to a very crisp texture, like artificial little trees. It works great in cheese and broccoli soup and casseroles.

**Fruits** are simple to dehydrate, too. You can just slice ripe **bananas** 1/4-inch thick onto your tray and dry them to a leathery-hard disc. **Peach** slices are equally easy. Make your own raisins from whole seedless

**grapes**. Just stem them, sort and lay out in a single layer. Easy? You bet.

**Apples** can be peeled (or not) and sliced 1/4-inch thick into a bowl of water with a good squeeze of lemon and a teaspoonful of salt in it to prevent discoloration. Then they are drip dried and laid in a single layer on the dehydrator trays. Apples dry to a leathery-crisp texture. I keep about 3 gallons of dehydrated apple slices, as they cook up quickly and easily in recipes from pies to granola. We like them for treats, too.

**Strawberries** dry nicely when sliced 1/4-inch thick. You'll want these dehydrated to a crisp texture. I've used a lot of fresh ones, but have bought frozen strawberries on a great sale and done them up with equal success. I put up as many dehydrated strawberries as I have and am glad for them come winter.

Home dehydrating is easy and the food tastes good. An added bonus is that a bushel of produce can be dehydrated and stored in a couple of jars. Many foods contain up to 90 percent water. Pick up a good book on dehydrating food, and go at it.

## Canning foods

While you can buy up a bunch of canned meats, vegetables, fruits, jams, jellies, pickles, and so forth at the store to put in a long-term storage pantry, it's a good idea to learn to home-can foods. Both will have an indefinite shelf life, but home-canned foods will be much more tasty and nutritious. And if a situation develops where you can not buy more store-bought food, you can reuse your jars and rings (not lids) and home-can more food to restock your pantry. All it takes is a garden and a little skill.

Nearly anything you see canned in the store can be canned at home, including meat. Here's how:

### Equipment needed:

- Water bath canner for high-acid foods, such as fruit, pickles, jelly, jams, preserves, tomatoes and tomato

sauce. A "Big blue" canner costs \$21-\$27 and lasts indefinitely.

- Pressure canner for low-acid foods, such as vegetables and meats. (No, they do not blow up.) This canner has a gauge or weight on top, along with a lock-down heavy lid. Cost new is \$89-\$139. Lasts indefinitely. (I bought a used one for \$5.)

- Canning jars, from half pint upwards, depending on your needs. Cost new is \$5.49-\$6.49 per dozen, including new rings and lids. Jars last indefinitely, rings 20+ years with care. I've been given boxes and boxes, bought others for less than \$1 a dozen at flea markets and auctions. Ask around. Standard canning lids must fit correctly.

- Lids to fit jars, either wide mouth or regular. Cost \$.94 to \$1.89 per dozen (wide mouth are more expensive). One use only.

- Canning book or manual, such as *Ball Blue Book*. Cost \$5.95-\$18. Lasts indefinitely (or until a new one comes out with the latest safe canning information).

- Jar funnels, jar lifters, and lid wands to pick up hot lids are all cheap and last forever.

## High-acid foods

### Fruits, tomatoes, pickles, etc.

High-acid foods are the easiest to can, as they require no pressure canning. High-acid foods do not develop bacteria that cause food poisoning. If they go bad, they mold or ferment instead. Yucky, but not deadly. Canning with a water bath canner processes foods at water-boiling temperature, which seals the jars.

Whenever I begin to can any food, I always get out my canning manual no matter how many hundreds of times I've put up the same exact food. You should do the same. While you are looking through it for the food you are going to water bath can today, take a gander at the altitude chart if you live above 1,000 feet. You will need to adjust the time upwards by 5

minutes for altitudes between 1,001-3,000 feet, adding another five minutes for altitudes between 3,001 and 6,000 feet, another five for altitudes between 6,001 and 8,000 feet, and so on. We live at 4,200 feet, so I add 10 minutes to all processing times.

Okay, let's can peaches to see how to use the water bath canner. The basic process is the same, but there are differences for each food, so read your canning manual before starting.

1. Get out your jars, and check for cracks or nicks in the rim; any damaged jars need to be thrown away because they will not seal and will often break during processing.

2. Wash jars and rings in hot soapy water. Rinse and leave in hot water until needed.

3. Select only sound, ripe peaches (unripe peaches will not peel easily).

4. To peel peaches, dip them in a kettle of boiling water for a minute only, then drain and put into cold water. This loosens the skin, making them easy to slip off.

5. Cut peaches in half. Remove pit. Leave in halves or cut into desired slices. Drop pieces into a large bowl containing cold water and either half a cup of lemon juice or a commercial product to prevent darkening, such as Fruit Fresh.

6. Place jar on dry folded towel and pack peaches, leaving half an inch of head space (head space is just room at the top of the jar).

7. Pick out enough new jar lids for your jars and bring to a boil in enough water to just cover them. Keep them in hot water until you are ready to use them.

8. Cover peaches with boiling hot syrup (see your manual for proportions of this sugar and water solution), leaving half an inch of head space.

9. Slide a wooden spoon or rubber spatula down between the peaches to let air bubbles escape and more syrup contact the fruit.

10. Wipe the jar rim well with a clean damp cloth. Place hot lid on jar and screw down ring firmly tight. Use no force.

11. Place jars on rack of full, hot, water bath canner. Never place hot jars in contact with anything cold or vice versa, as they will break.

12. When the canner is full, the water should cover all of the jars by one inch. If you need to add more water, use a tea kettle of hot water to bring the level up to the necessary point.

13. Bring water to a rolling boil with the top on the canner. When it begins to boil vigorously, begin your timing. For altitudes below 1,000 feet, you'll need to process your peaches for 25 minutes for pints and 30 minutes for quarts.

14. When the time is up, turn off heat and remove the jars from the canner carefully with a jar lifter. Place on a dry folded towel, out of drafts, to cool. Don't tighten any bands that seem loose. The jars will seal. When the jars are cool (over night), inspect seals. A sealed jar will have a tight indentation in the center of the flat lid. It will not give on pressure from a finger in the center. The contents of an unsealed jar should be eaten at once or refrigerated.

15. Remove the bands and wash if necessary. The bands are not necessary to maintain the seal and may cause rust to form. Store the jars in a dark, dry, relatively cool place.

That's all there is to water bath canning. If you can boil water and tell time, you can do it easily.

## Low-acid foods

### Vegetables, meats, stews, etc.

Remember, none of these foods can be safely canned in a hot water bath canner, no matter what your grandma or auntie used to do. It is simply not safe.

In the water bath canning process we had to adjust the time we processed our foods, according to

altitudes above 1,001. In a like manner, we must adjust the pressure we process our foods with for altitudes above 1,001. Check your canning manual for the correct pressure for your altitude.

Before you start, unless your canner is new, have the pressure gauge checked by your extension office to make sure it reads correctly. Most do, but to be safe have it checked.

Some pressure canners have weights over a pressure valve, but for simplicity's sake, we'll assume your pressure canner has a gauge, as most do today.

Let's do up a batch of chili. Most foods are pressure canned in nearly the same way, but, again, check your canning manual for other foods. For recipes with mixed ingredients, simply process the food for the longest length of time required for any single ingredient. In this case, it's meat.

1. Select crack and nick-free jars.

2. Make a large pot of your favorite chili; the beans do not have to be completely tender, but well cooked.

3. Wash jars in hot soapy water, then rinse, keeping hot until needed.

4. Boil enough lids for your jars and keep in hot water until needed.

5. Place jar on dry folded towel and carefully ladle your chili into the jar, leaving one inch head space.

6. Wipe jar rim with damp, clean cloth. Place hot lid on and screw down ring firmly tight. Use no force.

7. Place jars on rack in pressure canner, containing two inches of hot water. (Or the amount recommended by manufacturer.)

8. Fasten pressure canner lid firmly with steam valves open. Turn on heat.

9. Exhaust steam forcefully for 10 minutes.

10. Close petcock or vent, allowing pressure to build.

11. Hold at correct pressure (10 pounds for altitudes below 1,000 feet) for an hour and fifteen minutes (pints), or an hour and a half (quarts). Adjust heat as needed.

12. When time is up, turn off heat. When gauge returns to zero, carefully release any remaining steam and remove lid, taking care to avoid any steam in canner.

13. Lift out jars carefully with jar lifter and place on a dry, folded towel, away from drafts, to cool. Do not tighten any loose bands.

14. When cool, check for seal. Sealed jars dent inward and do not give under the pressure of a finger in the center.

15. Remove rings and wash jars. Store in a dark, cool, dry place.

I told you it was easy.

When opening the jar, again check the seal, then open it and inspect and sniff the product. If any of these raises questions of quality, throw it out where animals and children can not get hold of it. To be safe, always bring low-acid foods to boiling temperature for 15 minutes before eating.

Now, using your home food processing skills, you can effectively and cheaply stock up enough food to last your family through any hard time. Be sure to store goodies, such as fruits, favorite canned recipes, jams, pickles, etc. When one is having worries, nothing helps like a little treat.

Here are some samples of home canned foods you can store and use:

Apples, applesauce, apricots, baby foods, asparagus, barbecue sauces, beans of all types, beef roasts, stew meat, beets, blackberries, cabbage, corn, carrots, celery, cherries, cheese, chicken, chili, clam chowder, clams, conserves, corned beef, crab apple jelly & pickles, cranberry sauce, elderberry jelly, elk, fish, grapefruit, grapes, grape jelly, greens, jams, ground beef, jellies, juices, lamb, maple syrup, mixed vegetables, mincemeat, moose, mushrooms, okra, parsnips, peaches, pears, peppers, pickles, pie fillings, plums, plum jelly and conserve, poke, pork, potatoes, poultry, preserves, pumpkin, rabbit, raspberries, rhubarb, salsa, sauerkraut, sausage, seafoods, soups, taco

meat, taco sauce, tomatoes, tomato catsup, tomato sauce, turkey, turnips, venison, watermelon pickles, wild game, fowl, and much more.

Remember though, there are 52 weeks in a year, so if times get tough you will need more food than you first think. There may be no fast food, only homecooked meals. Calculate carefully and err on the bountiful side, rather than have your family go hungry. And can a wide variety. No family likes to eat beans every meal.

## Pet foods

Perhaps the easiest foods to store for your dogs and cats are dry foods. Under decent storage conditions, a good quality dog or cat food will remain fresh for at least a year. Store a high quality dry food, not the “cheaper” brands. As with most everything, you get what you pay for. Add up what your pets eat in a week, a month, then multiply it by 12. Store in rodent-proof containers.

It's also a good idea to include a few cans of quality dog and cat food for a treat now and then. I knew a lady who survived the depression with her dear fox terrier. The woman was very poor and could not afford any dog food, whatsoever. And, of course, there were very few table scraps. So to feed her beloved pet, she trapped woodchucks and muskrats, which she skinned for a few dollars and canned the boned meat for her dog. Coupled with a few meager table scraps, her fox terrier came through the hard times fat and sassy.

You and your family can come through hard times in triumph, not merely “survive” them. All it takes is a bit of planning, a lot of hard work, and some ingenuity. Δ